

Minutes of the **ANNUAL TOWN MEETING** of Buckingham held in Buckingham Community Centre on Wednesday 24th March 2010 at 7.30 pm

Present: Cllr. Howard Mordue – Deputy Town Mayor  
9 Town Councillors  
Mr. Jon McGinty – AVDC  
Mr. Mark Grindall - BCC  
Sgt Paul Cladingboel – Thames Valley Police  
20 Parishioners of Buckingham

Also present: Mr. Christopher Wayman – Town Clerk  
Mrs. Anita Simonds – Deputy Town Clerk

### **1. Apologies for absence**

RESOLVED to note that apologies were received from Town Councillors Bloomfield, Cadd, P. Collins, Hirons and Lehmann and Mr. Andrew Grant AVDC.

### **2. To receive and approve the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 25th March 2009**

Proposed by Councillor Isham, seconded by Mr. Rodney Blackall, and RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 25th March 2009.

### **3. To receive a report by the Mayor of Buckingham and the Chairmen of the different Committees on the work of Buckingham Town Council**

In place of The Mayor Cllr. Mordue as Deputy Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting. Respects were paid to Cllr. Pam Desorgher who died in December 2009 and had served on the Town Council for 10 years.

The Deputy Mayor welcomed Cllr. Lisa O'Donoghue who was successful in the election to take vacant seat on the Council.

The Deputy Mayor presented a brief report as follows:

The Council is continually active on your behalf and is very mindful of the pressure put on Buckingham by developers and the need to retain a sense of identity and proportion in this lovely Market Town. Although the Council accepts the need for some growth in the right areas it is against wholesale unsustainable expansion. Buckingham is fortunate in having weathered the economic storm better than some towns and is pleased to welcome M&Co into the space caused by the demise of Woolworths.

In vacuum, caused by other bodies in cost cutting exercises we fervently support the Buckingham Hospital and have agreed to fund the Tourist Information Office, Buckingham Festival Fortnight and to provide Public Toilet Facilities. Cllr. Mordue finished by thanking all of the Town Council staff for their hard work over the past year.

Following this Cllr. Robin Stuchbury highlighted the work of the Town Centre and Events Committee including the various events throughout the year and the installation of a new fingerpost in the town centre.

Cllr. Warren Whyte as Chairman of the Planning Committee expressed the disappointment of the Committee and the Council that the development south of the A421/east of the A413 has been allowed. The work and time spent addressing the Core Strategy part of the Local Development Framework and the impending Vision and Design Statement, conservation area, town centre access and car parking reviews were stated

Cllr. Mike Smith gave an overview of the remit of the Environment and Property Committee and highlighted the continuing progress in improving the parks and the cemetery. The impending installation of the Play Area and MUGA in Chandos Park was explained.

As Vice-Chairman of the Finance, Administration and Personnel Committee Cllr. Ruth Newell detailed the work of the committee over the past year which has included the updating of policies and the appointment of new staff.

#### **4. To receive a presentation from a representatives on their work in 2008/2009**

##### 4.1 Buckinghamshire County Council

Mark Grindall gave a power point presentation on the work of the County Council and the Local Area Forum which covers Buckingham. Mark highlighted the high priorities identified by the Local Area Forum.

##### 4.2 Aylesbury Vale District Council

Jon McGinty of Aylesbury Vale District Council presented a PowerPoint presentation on the work of the District Council.

##### 4.3 Thames Valley Police

Sgt Paul Cladingboel informed the meeting that new officers are in post with a further part-time PCSO due to start in April. A new shift pattern has resulted in more officers on duty on a Friday and Saturday night.

###### 4.3.1 Neighbourhood Action Group

Cllr. Mike Smith introduced the Buckingham Neighbourhood Action Group explaining that they meet in the town to discuss areas of concern and discuss potential solutions. They work with Thames Valley Police to help improve the policing in the town including looking at CCTV for the Town Centre and raising funds for better youth facilities and speed detection devices.

#### **5 To receive a presentation from The Buckingham Partnership on their work in 2008/2009**

A copy of a slide show was given to the people present at the meeting

##### 5.1 Buckingham Business Club

John Riches of the Buckingham Business Club gave a short speech indicating the progress made by the group on key topics including trying to obtain a job centre outreach present in the town.

## 5.2 Buckingham Economic Group

Cllr. Mike Smith highlighted the work of the Economic Group.

## 5.3 Aylesbury Vale Advantage

The representative from Aylesbury Vale Advantage was unable to attend the meeting.

## 6. Presentation of the 'Friend of Buckingham' awards

The Mayor presented the Friend of Buckingham awards to Steve and Rosemary Heywood for their tireless work for the Christmas Parade and other organisations in the town.

## 7. To receive reports by recipients of 2009/2010 grants over £1000

Buckingham Athletic Sports & Social Club, St. Peter and St. Paul Church and Buckingham Citizens Advice Bureau attended the meeting and gave a presentation of how their grant was spent.

## 8. Questions from the Residents of Buckingham

The Deputy Mayor explained that a number of written questions were submitted and would be answered after questions from the floor.

**Question:** Was there any updated information on the Bridge Street Development?

**Answer: BTC** - The Town Council had contacted the developer in February 2010 to enquire when work would restart on the site. The developer at that time said that they were 75% certain that work would restart on the site by the end of March.

**Question:** A resident of Moorhen Way enquired if street lights could be installed from Cornwall's Meadow Car Park Bridge to Moorhen Way and a litterbin installed at the entrance to Moorhen Way on the same path.

**Answer: BTC** - The Town Council would write to AVDC who own the land to see if they would take up the enquiry

**Question:** Would the seat previously outside the Kings Head Pub be replaced?

**Answer: BTC** - The seat had belonged to the pub and was removed. The Town Council are currently talking with the County Council about installing a bus shelter in the area with seating.

**Question:** The population of Milton Keynes is due to grow to 325,000 by 2026. There are 3 roads into Bucks from Milton Keynes, the A421 and A422 which lead to Buckingham and the M40, and the A4146 to Leighton Buzzard and Aylesbury. Bucks has just completed a £63 million dual carriageway bypass of the A4146 at Stoke Hammond and is planning a £80-100 million extension of this to Aylesbury. As far as the A421 and A422 towards Buckingham are concerned:-

a) When will the A421 upgrade west of Milton Keynes to Tingewick, talked about for a number of years now, actually start?

b) Why is the A422 from Buckingham to Milton Keynes North not a primary route nor mentioned in any road improvement plans?

c) The Buckingham bypass is a 3 mile 7.3m width single carriageway loop road with 14 junctions and is rated by various road lobby groups as one of the most pathetic bypasses in the UK. With the ongoing expansion westward of MK the A421 will need to be re-routed south of Buckingham and engineered to the same standard as the Stoke Hammond bypass. Will this requirement be

in the final version of the new Bucks CC LTP3 Transport Document that comes into effect next year?

**Answer: BCC** – A comprehensive and technical answer was read out from the Transport Department from BCC. Essentially the reason why no work would be taking place is due to there being no central government funding to carry out the work.

**Question:** It was requested that pothole repairs need to be adequately maintained to prevent the problems that have been encountered this year.

**Answer: BCC** - Transport for Buckinghamshire took over the contract a year ago and have obligations in their contract which they have to fulfil as a result maintenance will be improved. A more co-ordinated response for road repairs including involving utilities is being undertaken.

**Question:** a) Buckingham keeps hearing of all the retail development planned for Aylesbury but as a recent shopping survey on the AVDC website confirms few Buckingham people travel to Aylesbury for their shopping needs. What money has AVDC earmarked to boost the attractiveness of Buckingham as a shopping centre?

**Answer: AVDC** - AVDC's Economic Development team have been working with the Buckingham Economic sub-group to support a range of initiatives to boost the local economy. This included financial support for the production of the Buckingham Guide and helping to fund the Christmas events organised by the Traders Association.

In terms of other support AVDC would help to fund a Town Centre Manager and the Aylesbury Town Centre Manager would be willing to share experiences and help set up a farmers market in the town.

AVDC's were instrumental in helping to secure growth area funds from Aylesbury Vale Advantage to help support various studies that will help support Buckingham's offer in the long term.

**Question:** b) The nearest key employment areas planned by AVDC other than at Aylesbury up to 2026 are at Westcott and Silverstone. Will AVDC be funding a Dadford and Stowe bypass to give better access to Silverstone, the closest of these sites to Buckingham?

**Answer: AVDC** - AVDC do not have money for road building and a bypass in this location, is not something that is scheduled as part of the development brief for the Silverstone area. The main focus for major transportation improvements are focused on the A43 links.

AVDC will be working closely with the highways authority to ensure that appropriate traffic assessments and any required local traffic measures are planned for and implemented.

**Question:** The resident asked a follow-up question: Will Buckingham be a key employment point in the Core Strategy?

**Answer: AVDC** - It would be inappropriate to discuss the matter as the inspector is currently reviewing the Core Strategy.

**Question:** Are there plans to provide signs for motorists to view which direct them to the Church?

**Answer: BTC** - There are no plans in place and the Town Council has recently provided a finger post for the Town Centre and there is limited parking at the church for vehicles.

**Question:** Buckingham has in recent times lost its: Magistrates court, Ambulance station (Maids Moreton), Old peoples home (Maids Moreton). Rumours have been circulating that it might also lose its Police station, Fire station, Hospital.

It is served by some of the poorest 'A' roads in the country and struggles badly when trying to compete with other local towns in attracting new companies. This situation seems very unlikely to alter while Buckingham remains under Aylesbury's control at both county and district level. Therefore,

a) Will the Town Council consider the possibility of extracting itself from Aylesbury's control, and look at alternative possibilities such as the formation of a North Bucks District Council, or an Ouse Valley District Council? The actual area covered by such a council would need serious

investigation and might need to include the total rural area of North Bucks. It would have the major benefit however of a much greater likelihood that Buckingham money would be spent on projects much more relevant to Buckingham.

**Answer: BTC** - A group has been set up from the community to talk to the PCT regarding health provision in the town. It is currently meeting the PCT and will look at which services could be provided the best in Buckingham.

The problems of forming a new authority were discussed there would be some benefits such as providing services more locally. However, there would also be a large number of problems and without forming a unitary council it would still have limited powers.

**Question:** b) What notice has Aylesbury, at both County and District level, taken of the Buckingham Plan?

**Answer: BTC** - While it looked as though it was going to be received well initially. It was felt that as it was a Town Council initiative it did not include the issues which AVDC and BCC wanted. This may be the reason that there is a lack of AVDC and BCC involvement in producing actions.

**Question:** Following the introduction of parking restrictions on Chandos Road in Spring 2009 there is a large amount of nuisance parking on Chandos Close including difficulty in the refuse and other lorries unable to gain access which would also stop fire and ambulance services gaining access. A letter was written to BCC, a reply was received in June 2009 (copy to S. Harding) indicating that this would be entered to be considered at the next review for possible inclusion for work by AVDC. However no reply has been received since.

**Answer: AVDC** – As a result of complaints over parking in Chandos Road, Buckingham parking restriction were brought into force in 2009. It is hoped that both Chandos Road and Close will be considered as part of the Town Parking Survey and after the plan AVDC is willing to sit down and look again at this matter.

**BCC** – To carry out a review takes between 9 and 12 months, funding though is finite. Cars causing obstructions are a matter for the Police. BCC felt that the reply given in writing to the resident previously was comprehensive and that no further reply was needed. BCC are currently looking at school parking to find a solution to problems at Chandos Road.

**Question:** Will the Town Councillors present at the meeting give their candid opinions on any likely planning applications succeeding for the development of any of the Ford Meadow site, in view of the many problems encountered so far with the White Hart car park development. Surely this isn't a viable scheme for the reasons of access to the site and also the 13 foot floodwater above the normal river level (when only the crossbars were visible) in a past incident of flooding. If more building on floodplains is allowed then surely it brings more trouble for the future of the town and more expense for the ratepayers. It would also be interesting to know how many of our Town Councillors voted against the White Hart car park development, and how many of those who did support it are having second thoughts as it is nothing more than an eyesore to our town. I realise that AVDC have the final say on planning applications of this size but then AVDC doesn't seem to like to hear the ordinary ratepayer's point of view and we are more than often treated as the poor relations of the district.

**Answer: BTC** - It is rather pre-emptive to believe that the playing of football is about to cease at this location if the press reports last week are to be believed, but if the current use was to stop, any new proposal would need to obtain change of use permission from the District Council. When the Town Council Planning Committee previously discussed this site, it did not believe that the site suited development, the site was an important open space and part of the green infrastructure, and that it was an integral part of the flood control of the town centre (as is clearly seen in the adjacent Chandos Park). It should be noted however, that no application has been received, and if an application was to be submitted, it would have to be considered by the committee with all relevant facts such as access arrangements and engineering reports.

Contrary to the suggestion in the question, it should be noted that AVDC makes the final decision on every planning application in Buckingham, not just the large ones. AVDC as the statutory planning authority, does have a duty to consult the Town Council, but does not have to

agree with, and often doesn't, the suggestions and comments we forward to them (such as the significant objections we had for the A413/A421 London Road site.

It is well known that the decision for the Bridge Street/White Hart site was contentious for some, but it should be noted that the Environment Agency and the District Council did permit this scheme due to the mix of riverside improvements and the controls to the underground car park. The town council planning committee supported the final proposal as it brought substantial investment to the town centre (with housing, flats and some retail space) and opened up the river bank between Bridge Street and Cornwall Meadow, with important flood control measures incorporated into the landscape and the building.

There is little to be gained in bemoaning the construction slow-down that has hit the entire county as this has no bearing on the planning decision, as a builder has a given number of years to implement the plan. We are alas suffering the side effects that has hit many development sites up and down the country. The town council has been advised by the contractor Lagan Homes that there is a 75% chance of work starting again this spring. We are keen for them to re-start as we are as aware as anyone of the aesthetic impact of the vacant site to visitors and residents alike.

**Question:** For year 2009/10 we saw an increase in planned expenditure after income over 2008/09 of 20% (£553,120 - £664,649). For the year 2010/11 you plan to spend £848,663 a further increase of 28%. How can this be justified in the current economic climate with many council tax payers income being decreased or at best frozen?

Over the past 3 years you expected to spend £214,300 on the planned extension to the Town Council offices. For the year 2010/11 you plan to spend a further £128,815 making a total of £343,000 before construction has commenced. Are there not less expensive solutions to this problem and are they being examined before the first brick is laid?

**Answer: BTC** - The reason for the increase in expenditure is due to some of the earmarked reserve money is due to be spent; it is not extra funds being raised and ring fenced for specific spending.

The Town Council has investigated a number of sites such as the Chandos Road Cinema, Old Bookshop and Ward's Hardware. A further alternative is being looked into. The extension will also include a Community Room and Public Toilets.

Thames Valley Police confirmed that they will be moving out of the current Police Station and are looking at another site.

## **9. Mayor's points for information**

There were no further points for information.

The Meeting finished at 10pm.